

TUFOIC NEWSLETTER

Tasmanian UFO Investigation Centre

JULY - OCTOBER 1998

Edition 84

DOUBLE NEWSLETTER.

Quite often when the public contacts the Centre they are under the impression that we are some sort of Government Department, or private company. The Centre of course is operated by a small core of interested members in their spare time, who still have to perform their daily work, home chores and attend to family matters.

Recently other matters have seen a delay to the printing of the Annual Report, this in turn has coincided with one of the busiest periods on record at the Centre for incoming calls, this added to the time consuming follow-up on case investigation has stretched our resources. Between May and August 78 calls were logged by the Centre, not to mention general queries and correspondence.

Another minus for the Centre was the loss of our Northern representative, Jacob Willard, who has found steady employment at St. Helens and obviously does not have the time to pursue UFO reports. We wish Jacob well in his new position. We also had to pass up the opportunity of presenting a paper at the UFO Conference in Sydney, as Paul Jackson was unable to attend at the last minute. Matt Whayman, was invited to represent TUFOIC, at very short notice. Matt provided an interesting account of the proceedings at our September Meeting.

The brief visit of Stanton Freidman was of interest, although those continually exposed to the flow of UFO news probably heard nothing new in his lecture. However, it was informative to listen to his presentation and he also gave the audience the chance to advise the Centre of any sightings. His visit prompted a number of letters to the Editor of the Hobart Mercury newspaper (see elsewhere in the Newsletter).

The writers seemed more concerned with Freidman's qualifications than his UFO data. A conservative response from the Centre was also published but was somewhat trivialised by inserting a cartoon of a Frisbee next to our letter.

TASMANIAN SCENE

As mentioned previously the Centre has been extremely busy during the mid-year with at times a daily flow of reports to investigate. At the time of writing (September) over 110 reports have come to our attention for 1998 plus a number from earlier years. The extra cases has not translated into any significant percentage increase in UFO sightings. A larger than usual proportion of the sightings were due to astronomical causes. Possibly this was due in part to the fine dry winter weather with scintillating stars tricking many witnesses. Other phenomena included an Aurora, and a reflection of the setting sun on water shinning onto fog clouds. The hot air balloons looked to have reared their ugly head again, this time in Launceston and South Hobart! A concentration of cases has come from the New Norfolk to Granton area of the Derwent Valley with isolated cases elsewhere. However, the Derwent Valley reports have been uncovered in part by having a Representative in the right spot at the right time. Bill Kelly's local knowledge of the area has helped to uncover additional sightings that would otherwise have gone unreported. It highlights the fact a huge number of UFO cases are going to remain hidden from the Centre.

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NEW SIGHTINGS FROM OTHER YEARS

A number of interesting older cases have been reported in recent months whilst the passing of time will erode some of the fine detail from the witnesses' account of the incident. Nonetheless, the cases are still worthy of inclusion in our data.

About 11pm one winter's night in 1980 two women were travelling to their homes near Elizabeth Town. One of the ladies lived at nearby Wegeana and was dropped off first by her friend. A set of lights appeared near the car as they neared Wegeana, and when they stopped the bright object looked to be only 200m away over farm buildings. One of the ladies made a dash to her house and telephoned her friend's husband to explain what was happening and that she was on the way home. The husband looked out in time to see his wife arrive home with a large white light in the sky behind. He watched the light for about 30 minutes before it moved slowly towards the Western Tiers then increased speed and was out of sight in seconds.

Our next case which may involve missing time occurred on June 11th, 1984. We have an exact date as the two witnesses had been to a sporting event at Devonport that day and a search of newspaper records established the date of the sighting, although the times were estimated by the witnesses. Miss L, as she was at the time, had gone to Devonport for the day's event with her fiancé, A. She had to be home early that night to prepare for a visit to Melbourne the next day. Accordingly they left as soon as the day's sporting activities were finalised, however, family members and friends stayed for the social and food provided. The timing of the sighting is not easy as no exact times can now be recalled. The witnesses probably left sometime after 4.30pm on the trip home to Hobart indicating the close encounter on the highway occurred between 6.30 to 7pm.

Miss L was driving the car as A tried to have some sleep on the journey home.

Miss L recalled noticing a white light after heading south from Perth. The light seemed to be away over distant hills as it darted in various directions, and appeared in the distance on either side of their car. Miss L kept pointing it out to A but in the end they just ignored it.

The sighting finally came to a climax as they were entering St Peter's Pass.

Rounding a curve in the highway Miss L was confronted by an object just above the right side of the road. She pulled off the highway and thumped her fiance to wake him up and make sure he got out for a look at the object. Hovering some 10m up just above roadside trees was a 10 to 20m circular object. despite being a still starry night the trees below the object seemed to be blowing about. Red, white, and blue lights were spinning anti-clockwise around the perimeter, with a metallic looking surface as seen from below.

Miss L cannot recall the length of time that she was standing looking up at the object, she said she felt excited whilst her fiancé was rather shocked. She recalls that a stream of traffic heading north was approaching so she danced up and down pointing up into the night sky. However, before the cars arrived the object made a super-sonic whistling noise, rose up, then tilted on its side. It now presented more of a cone shape with the lights at the front, it rapidly dwindled to a white dot and was gone in seconds.

The pair continued on home to see Miss L's parents, being surprised to find that they were almost half way through the evening's TV movie possibly indicating they had taken over two hours for the last 100k of the trip home. Whilst changing at her parent's house Miss L also noticed a puzzling 1cm vertical cut on her stomach. The witnesses were even more surprised to find that A's parents had somehow arrived home ahead of them although they did not recall passing each other on the trip.

Mr D's sighting near Cygnet on July 23rd, 1992 was a bit more straightforward although the dog seemed to sense that something was happening. It was about 9pm on a clear evening when D's dog started to howl. D and his wife soon went out on their deck to see what was wrong. The house is fairly high up overlooking a valley. Out to their north-east they saw an intense white moon sized ball moving fairly quickly up the slope above tree height. Moving just ahead of the ball were six smaller lights.

Cont. next page

NEW SIGHTINGS FROM OTHER YEARS Cont.

The ball seemed to turn just before reaching the witnesses' home, moved parallel with them, then picked up speed and headed away east down the valley out of sight. Both witnesses experienced an intense sensation up the back of their necks.

They also heard other dogs howling further down the valley as the ball moved away. The ball which was in view for a number of minutes was not a man made flying vehicle, related Mr. D.

Fine days, blue sky, perfect weather to be out and about. But what is it that keeps appearing in the skies of Northern Tasmania in recent years? Yet another report of a silver shiny shape has come to our attention, and like all the others, the method of disappearance is one of the puzzling factors. The objects just seem to disappear into thin air right in front of the witnesses. Three witnesses at Aberdeen just south of Devonport one fine day in February 1994 were surprised to see a silver-grey object against the blue sky. At first the cigar was stationary in the east, then it started moving in an erratic path towards the south. It would move along a level path, then down and up until it slowed up in the southern sky. The cigar which was about 1/2 moon in width then just disappeared into thin air much to the amazement of the witnesses. Similar reports occurred in 1996, early 1997, and near Launceston in June 1998.

Occasionally it takes time to collect information on a sighting and this case from near St Marys in October 1996 is one. Initially a young member of the family came in very frightened about 8.45pm one evening. She told that whilst out in the backyard on the trampoline, an oval object had appeared overhead. The oval was white in color but had small red and green lights around its rim. The light mass disappeared away towards the north-east. An adult in the household had a strange dream that night. A tall featureless figure entered the bedroom and put something like a laser beam on the adult's right temple. The next day the adult had two brown marks on the temple, a burn mark on the arm, none of which were there the previous day. That evening about 9.15pm a similar object was seen by nine witnesses. A bright white misty oval of light was noticed to the north-west. It moved silently across the northern sky. The object was viewed with binoculars and looked to have fuzzy edges.

It moved away towards St Helens and went out of sight behind Mt. Nicholas. One of the witnesses thought it could have landed up in the rugged bush. A call at the time to Launceston Airport revealed no aircraft in the area at that time.

Another possible missing time case from mid 1997 is currently under investigation. The two witnesses were travelling home on the road between Longford and Hagley about 7pm. One witness noticed an oval mass of bright white light ahead at the end of the straight. At the same time the car radio went all crackley. The driver of the car turned off the car radio and as the light mass rushed at the car enveloping the car and witnesses in a bright area of light. Neither witness can recall exactly what happened next. The driver said they were further along the straight with the same light passing over the car. Next thing she knew was that they were on the Bass Highway heading west. They arrived home about 30 minutes later than expected.

In the News

A New UFO documentary has created some controversy since being broadcast on TV in the USA, during mid September.

THE SECRET KGB UFO

the Soviet Union's encounters with extraterrestrial intelligence and UFOs in Russia, Romania, China and the Eastern Bloc.

Roger Moore hosts this special featuring never-before-seen footage of what is believed to be actual crash sites and alien autopsies, first-hand accounts with former agents of the KGB of UFO incidents, powerful re-creations of alien encounters and first-time interviews with the experts who have seen the documentation and know the truth. THE SECRET KGB UFO FILES paints a disturbing picture of the KGB's hidden campaign and discloses startling revelations that will forever change the way the world thinks about this phenomenon.

This is how the shows publicity describes it. The debate continues in the UFO community as to the authenticity of the claims made and the events depicted in the show.

On past experience, If something sounds too good to be true - It usually is. We shall see. We anticipate the production to be shown on our TV screens later in the year.

TASMANIAN UFO REPORTS 1998.

- Jan 8th. 04.40. **BURNIE**. Two witnesses see elongated shape, red on top and green below. Visible in NE sky until obscured by cloud.
- Jan 18th. 03.30. **TUNNACK**. Two white lights move down then level off towards the south, one lights changes to flashing red. Lights well separated.
- Jan 25th. 01.30. **TUNNACK**. Two white lights travelling south, level out and one light starts flashing red. Lights well spaced and not on one object.
- Feb 8th. 09.45. **BELL BAY**. Five witnesses report white cigar object with smaller objects moving around it. Small objects disappear and cigar goes off to south.
- May 10th. 02.00. **BELLERIVE**. A stationary bright white light seen to SE, then it moves off to the west and goes behind high cloud.
- May 16th. 19.15. **NEW NORFOLK**. Witness sees flash of light from red light surrounded by circle of blue lights low to west. A red light appears at low level in the garden, moves to within 10m before turning off.
- May 17th. 20.30. **LAUDERDALE**. Bright light low to east with red/white/blue colours. Rises up to stop in sky alongside a prominent star before blinking off.
- May 18th. 20.30. **BLACK HILLS**. On three occasions two witnesses see an oval light in the northern sky, it looks to have a beam pointing towards the ground. It moves quickly away.
- May 21st. 17.45. **KINGSTON**. Two separate reports of a large pink/white light low to the west and moving away to the north-west. No air traffic in the area at the time.
- May 28th. 20.07. **MT LLOYD**. Two witnesses see a bright light low to the south-west. It looks to move around over the hills, then small lights seen darting around the larger light.
- May 31st. 01.10. **COLLINSVALE**. Witness notices flashes of light outside. Sees a series of huge square and triangular areas of light in front of Big Rocky hill. Lights go on/off for 2 minutes.
- June 5th. 02.30. **TUNBRIDGE**. Two travellers notice a rotating beam, of light in the clouds on or just above hills to SE. The beams rotates every 20-30 seconds.
- June 8th. 22.05. **DEVONPORT**. Two men leaving a house see a white light passing across to the NW. A video on night vision shows two lights. One light pulses and moves below and away from the first light. The lights recede to the north-west in differing configurations.
- June 19th. 19.20. **GRANTON**. Motorist reports a bright white light coming down off the hills west of the Lyell Highway. It hovers over the Derwent and looks round with 3 red portholes, and flashing blue, red, and orange lights.
- June 20th. 19.30. **GRANTON**. Motorist travelling north on highway says a row of 4 big red lights with 3 smaller lights appeared behind the vehicle. Some minutes later they disappeared after rounding a curve.
- June 29th. 14.20. **LAUNCESTON**. A shiny silver cigar is seen in a clear blue sky. The two witnesses say it just disappeared in a second. Launceston Airport had no air traffic in the area.
- July 23rd. 20.30. **GRANTON**. An ill-defined dome-shape with flickering blue/red/white lights is reported by a motorist. The object, taken at first for a helicopter, was stationary out over the Derwent River.
- July 24th. 22.30. **GRANTON**. A motorist sees red/yellow lights in front of the Dromedary Hills. The steady lights look to move up and down on the hill. The motorist thought it could be a helicopter and stopped for a couple of minutes before driving on.
- Aug 8th. 17.15. **BELL BAY**. A silver shape with an irregular flashing light is seen by two workers. The shape is darting about over Mt. George before it dives down behind the hills.

KING ISLAND SIGHTINGS

This summary of the recent King Island Sightings has been included primarily because of the media coverage they have received. We do not generally publish reports that we believe to be due to Hoaxes or Pranks, but we have made an exception here as our readers should be made aware of the facts surrounding these events.

THURSDAY 24/9/98

7.15pm. Witness was leaving home to go to dinner in Currie. Lives several kms north of town, on west side of Main Rd just beyond the Racecourse. Getting into car when a bright red light caught her eye, it was low to the east and seemed to be gaining elevation from behind the trees in that direction. At this stage she noticed a shimmer or sparkle beneath the light. It was about 1/4 to 1/2 moon sized and a flattish oval type shape. It looked to pass fairly close to the witness in level flight to the north. It was silent and moved slowly, almost like floating. The witness had time to get out of the car and watch it as it went away NW being obscured by trees in that direction. It was in view for 7-8 minutes. Told other people at the dinner.

7.18pm. Witness lives just north of Hill. Had gone out to collect wood, noticed a red ball almost 1/2 moon size seemingly coming straight at him from the SE. It was passing just to the north at a 50-60deg elevation. Tried to estimate its height at 500ft, but now feels it was higher. During observation about 4-5 times it seemed to have flames coming off the top right side, they were 1/3 size of the object itself. Silent, he thought it was a plane on fire, rang local Police. Came back out and it was still there moving away into the NW. It was getting smaller now and looked to dip a bit before being obscured by trees in that direction. Must have been in view well over 5 minutes.

Police. Confirms call from witnesses to red light. He called National Space & Meteor Hotline. They suggested that witnesses have seen a Hoax Balloon. He checked area but nothing visible.

Wind. 5knts Southerly.

FRIDAY 25/9/98

7.30-8pm. Witness saw an orange/pink light stationary to the N/NE. Then it seemed to gain elevation and start moving to the SW. It looked to gather speed and disappeared into the SW sky. Visible for 6-8 minutes.

8 - 8.30pm. Witness having dinner at Hotel, glanced out the window and noticed a bright red light out over the sea. It was about 45deg elevation and travelling in level path towards the south. Pointed it out to others. It was visible for nearly 2 minutes.

8.15pm. Witnesses live on the near Hospital Hill. Boys (aged 13-16) walking up from the town, saw out to the west a bright, large, orange light seemingly over the sea. It was moving along the coast towards the south. At one stage they noticed what looked like a whitish thing drop down from the light. The thing fell down and disappeared. It went away to the south and was in view some 5 minutes.

Wind. North east 10knts.

SATURDAY 26/9/98

7-7.15pm. Witnesses live just north of the town. A. First noticed a red light in the north-east, did not take much notice at first. An aircraft came in to land and take off at once from the Airport, went to have a look (probably a RAAF Orion). then called B. out as the light was still there. He brought out binoculars. He could see a bright orange/red round light with a glow around it. It was 2 x Jupiter sized to the naked eye. It was stationary in north-east below the overcast sky. After some 10-15 minutes it started to move horizontally away towards the NNE of the island. It moved slowly but after 2-3 minutes had been obscured by the cloud. The time was now 7.20 - 7.30pm.

7.10pm. Witness went outside for a cigarette. It was dull and cloudy, no stars. Noticed a bright red ball of light below the clouds in the N sky towards the Towers by the road north of the town. It did not appear to be moving. Then it went away towards the east, but it stopped briefly a couple of times as it moved on more towards the north-east. About 1/4 moon sized but bright. It faded into the distance after some 6-7 minutes.

about 8pm. Witness was at a party. Somebody noticed an orange/pink light in the north east. It was there for some 6-7 minutes before it looked to gain elevation and disappear. It was overcast at the time and there had been some drizzle.

Wind. SW at 5knts, .04m of rain between 7-8pm.

SUNDAY 27/9/98

7.30pm. Witness saw a pink /orange light appear out of the east. It was at a high elevation and seemed to be moving fast. Went across the sky beneath the moon and away to the west out over the sea. In view for 2-3 minutes. Called friend to have a look.

7.30 - 7.40pm. Witness received phone call, went out and saw a light that looked to be yellow with a red rim. It was moving at a steady speed from north-west towards the south-east. It passed just to his north. It was a large light, much bigger than a star. It seemed to suddenly shoot a flame or something from the back. It increased speed and went out of sight to south-east. Visible 3 minutes.

7.45pm. Witness decided to look for the light again. Went outside and there it was. A very bright red/orange light in the northern sky. It was moving from north-west to south-east. It was 2 x Jupiter in size. Managed to get a look with binoculars, there seemed to be a red flame at the rear. It was moving faster than earlier nights and was gone in 3-4 minutes. Met local Airport employee soon after, he had seen the same light. They rang **Tullamarine Control** who advised there were no aircraft in the area.

7.45pm. Witness at Airport office in Currie when noticed an orange light moving fast on a north to south track, it seemed high up and going south. View obscured after few minutes by hill line to south.

Checked for cloud cover at time, at 6-7000ft and wind 60deg 10-20knts.

7.40 - 7.52pm. Witness on outside deck and noticed a light crossing the sky. There was an orange light and glow some distance away towards the Racecourse direction. It was moving across the sky at a 35-40deg elevation. It passed along the coast and was moving south down the coast. The light was in the west and moved well to the south and faded into the distance

Wind. ENE wind at 10knots.

WEDNESDAY. 30/9/98

about 7.45pm. Witness on the house deck and noticed a light to the north, in direction of Airport. About 30m up over paddock to north of the house was a large round ball of orange light, it seemed to be spitting at her, like flecks of light coming off the ball. The 1/2 moon sized ball was not moving as the witnesses watched for about a minute. The light could have been a couple of hundred mts. away or 1 km off. She decided to get her binoculars for a better look. When she returned there was nothing to see.

8.17pm Witness near the Racecourse. Went out to feed dog. Turned and looked up and saw this large cone object approaching out of the north-east. (Like inverted ice-cream cone). It was silent and travelling almost directly overhead. Looked about 1/2 moon size and seemed to have shafts of orange light from all around it. It was travelling towards the SW but it did a long boomerang shaped turn and moved away to the SE. Looked to travel off quickly. It was in view 7-8 minutes. The weather was fine with low cloud and a few stars. Called for friend to come and have a look. She watched it move away.

8.15pm. Witness at the Airport with several other people. They all saw a bright orange light to the south. It was travelling away to the SE and seemed to fade or flicker a few times before it disappeared at a 45deg elevation. Maybe just got too far away to view. Visible for about 2 minutes.

about 8.20pm. Witness received Call from friend. Went outside and saw at once almost overhead a conical red glow or light. It was moving away to the east as he watched for some 4 minutes. Managed to look with binoculars. It seemed to have a white leading edge and flames or red glow trailing behind. Changed colours as moved further away, went from red to orange, until before faded out it turned to white and almost looked like a star. Seemed to fade into distance.

8.20pm. Witness had call from employee whom had spotted the orange light whilst driving north from Currie. He went out and at once noted the light coming from the north-west. Had a look with binoculars but it was just a big red light. The light passed to the west of his residence and looked to be moving off SW. Jumped into car and tried to follow the light, it seemed to be moving quicker and going higher. At one point something fell from the light. It was now south of the Grassy Road and moving into distance. He managed to keep it in sight for some 3 kmts until it faded into distance or went out. Last seen near location of Hydro Station.

Wind at Airport was NE, although it was more NW in Currie. Light breeze at ground level although clouds were moving quicker.

FRIDAY. 2/10/98

about 8PM. Witnesses had been to Grassy and were returning to Currie via Old Grassy Road. They were approaching a location known as the Dead Sea (lagoon) some 11k south east of Currie. A. said there is an aircraft in the sky ahead, B. could see flashing lights that looked low in the sky. Then they could see it was a triangle of red flashing lights, all flashing at the same time. The triangle covered about the area of a full moon. Witness said it was like looking at street lights from below. At the base in the centre was a white light or glow as if from a light source at the front of the object. No actual shape could be seen. Witness did not notice any movement, though that it was moving around as if going around a football field. He estimated the lights at 500 feet and 1-2 km distant. The car then rounded the curve and the headlights were pointed in the same direction (but not at) the lights. The witnesses felt that at once the lights moved off to their right side (NE) at speed. (Witness says 100mph). The lights moved up diagonally until they were going into the clouds, then they seemed to slow again. The red lights could be seen in the cloud, then in breaks in the cloud. The witness had slowed almost to a stop to view the lights. The lights picked up speed again and were obscured by the clouds. The sighting lasted 2-3 minutes.

Witness said the area of the sighting is tea-tree, bracken, marshy area with no pasture.

The witnesses contacted Burnie Rep: Andrew Mott within minutes of reaching home. Then they returned to Grassy to the Grassy Club to enquire if anyone else had seen the lights, they had seen one other car on the road soon after the sighting. The barman said 'so you have seen the lights as well'.

9:40 PM. Currie. Family spots orange light already in north-east sky moving towards south-east. Only seen for a couple of minutes. Seemed to flicker a bit, this may have been due to distance. Looked to go into cloud cover and was lost from view. Believe seen by others in the town, not heard of any early cases.

9.45pm. Currie. After returning from events earlier in the evening another orange light was seen to the north but well up in the sky. This big light seemed to come from the N to NE area and was travelling slowly to the SE. After some 3 minutes it had disappeared into the distance. They contacted a friend some 1/2 k down the Grassy Rd who also the orange light.

9.50pm. Witness was at Hotel with friends when someone called out the light was back. Went outside and saw an orange light fairly high up in the east. It was in view for a minute or two as it just seemed to move away into the eastern sky. Just faded into the distance.

Wind. 8pm was N at 5knts, by 10pm more N-NW 10knts. Cloud base 9pm 1600 feet.

KING ISLAND SIGHTINGS - FOOTNOTE.

Suggested explanations have been Hoax Balloons or a remote model, failing this some unexplained phenomena. Some have suggested this has been sparked by the 20th Anniversary of the Valentich disappearance. Certainly all the reports have been of a light moving over the town from the north. Witnesses on the northern edge of Currie have reported a resolved shape, cone like, flattened oval, or ball like. Mention in this area has been made of flames, flecks of light, and shafts of light. Some of the reports from Currie of a light at higher elevations have mentioned 'something' falling from the light. On one occasion the light was followed for 3 km south-east of the town. It has been reported as going up to the clouds, the cloud line being at 500m on that occasion.

One report on Friday October 2nd some 15 km south-east of Currie has occurred in isolation from the other sightings. This case does not appear to be connected to the orange lights over the town. A number of extraneous events have confused the issue. A Sun-Herald item which covered a case from 20 years ago but implied it was part of the current incidents. A couple of reports that the light has been seen for the last month, which may well have been a very bright Jupiter in the northern sky.

The evidence still points strongly towards some form of balloon device (excluding the Oct 2nd case).

The reports are consistent with the orange Garbage bag hoax/Prank seen in Hobart, Southern Victoria and parts of N.S.W. about 2 years back. Some of which were later discovered on the ground.

- They float gently along in the direction of the prevailing winds.
- They were not seen on the Monday or Tuesday - When there were very strong winds (Making it virtually Impossible to fly anything - Man made?).
- They were all seen in the same general area - North & North-east of Currie, and probably originated from somewhere between the Racecourse and the Airport.
- There were seen while many children were home on the Island on school holidays from Victoria, and the reports terminated when they returned to school.

Residents explain that no "secret" can be kept on the island with such a small community. Maybe, with the passage of time the prankster will come forward?

Explanations in the local press have ranged from Satellites, Flares, Aurora and various other Astronomical explanations. These have all been ruled out after examination of Satellite records, Sky charts and the fact that none of the reported descriptions match any of these explanations. Flares do not last up to 15 minutes, Astronomical objects are not seen under a totally clouded sky.

It is a real pity that those who put forward such explanations do not bother to perform even the most rudimentary of research on the events in question, or even bother to interview a single witness before exposing their theories. UFO groups are often maligned for being unscientific in their methods, and rightly so in some cases, yet one is left to question who is being more scientific in their search for the truth in this case.

SKYWATCH

MERCURY is currently visible low in the western sky just after dusk. It reaches greatest eastern elongation of 23 degrees on November 11 (Furthest point East of the Sun - the best time for observation).

VENUS is too close to the Sun for observation. It will reappear in the evening sky by the end of the year.

MARS is visible in the NE morning sky. It's moderate brightness and distinctive reddish colour make it easy to identify as it moves steadily westwards against the background stars from night to night.

JUPITER is currently at its best for observation. It is a very prominent object visible for most of the night, located high in the northern sky in mid-evening, its four brightest satellites - Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto - can be seen in binoculars. The Moon and Jupiter form an attractive, bright pairing on November 28.

SATURN reaches opposition on October 23 when it appears due north at midnight. To the unaided eye, Saturn is a moderately bright whitish object and easy to identify in Pisces, but its magnificent rings cannot be seen without the aid of a small telescope.

Meteor shower.

The Leonids Meteor shower this year has the potential to be a major storm, with the possibility of several thousand meteors per hour emanating from the direction of the Constellation of Leo. The period of activity is from November 14 to 21, reaching a peak on the 18th. Leo will not rise above the horizon until about 3.30AM (Tas. Daylight time) when it will be low in the NNE sky. The shower is predicted to peak at around 6.40AM, unfortunately Sun rise will be about 5.30AM. Keep observing for as long as possible, until it becomes too light to see any stars. If it lives up to expectations - You will not be disappointed that you got out of bed so early. The Shower is due to the Earth passing through debris left in the orbit of comet Swift-Tuttle.

Planetary Information was adapted from the Bulletin of the Astronomical Society of Tasmania October/November issue. GPO Box 1654, Hobart, Tasmania, 7001.

Internet: <http://www.vision.net.au/~peter/AST>

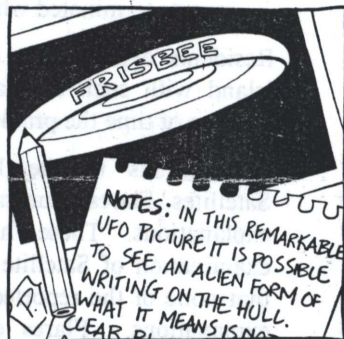
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Keep eye on the sky

The visit to Hobart of UFO lecturer Mr Stanton Freedman has generated a number of Letters (September 1). The response seemed more interested in Mr Freedman's qualifications as a physicist rather than the wealth of UFO data collected over the years.

Following discussions by a recent panel of nine scientists convened by the Society of Scientific Exploration, Stanford University's Peter Sturrock wrote: "It may be valuable to carefully evaluate UFO reports to extract information about an unusual phenomena currently unknown to science."

The Tasmanian UFO Investigation Centre conducts investigation into Tasmanian sightings and draws no con-



clusion other than the fact that an unexplained phenomena exists. Genuine reports for investigation from the public would be welcomed by the centre.

KEITH ROBERTS
South Hobart

UFO visits

According to Mr Stanton Friedman (The Mercury, August 28) planet Earth, a mere microdot in a vast universe consisting of trillions of stars and planets, regularly attracts thousands of interplanetary beings and objects.

Funny they never land in a football ground or similar venues where there are numerous cameras to record their visits as well as attempted abductions. Instead these interplanetary visitors seem to prefer affluent English-speaking countries.

Being a rationalist, I shall treat Mr Friedman and his ilk as pitiable fanatics until such time, I have solid proof.

S.DEAN
Bellerive

"... and remember, I'm a nuclear physicist." I hope that everyone who read this (The Mercury, August 28, P2) had a good chuckle. There is a pernicious myth that certain people have a special access to the truth but there is no infallible screening process for any occupation, not even physicists!

I'm sure Stanton Friedman's physics is okay, but this does not give him any authority over anyone else on the issue of assessing "... eyewitness testimonies ... scientific reports, documents and data ..."

MICHAEL SUMNER
South Hobart

Yet another sensational news item, ascribed to a nuclear physicist, appeared in The Mercury (P2, August 28).

This time we were told that Tassie is a prime target for UFOs — at least according to Mr Friedman — in contrast with the (nuclear) physicist/entrepreneur who was all set to clone humans earlier this year.

One cannot help gaining the impression, from these articles, that physicists are the source of radical ideas. I would like to point out that these so-called physicists are persons who have turned their backs on conventional physics to push their own barrows and I deplore the use of the term "physicist" by the media to give respectability to news items that are controversial if not far-fetched.

Let me remind the community that it is physicists working in traditional science areas who are responsible for the greatest advances in science and technology, including the internet, world-wide-web and communications, to which the news media and the general public have become addicted.

It would be useful if science reporters could check the qualifications and experience of such "physicists", before writing articles which serve to give physics a bad name.

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Canadian and Tasmanian UFO Data.

An unexplained percentage for a collection of Canadian UFO data came to hand recently. The figures surprisingly showed some interesting comparisons, especially the final UFO percentage.

Year	Canadian UFO's	Tasmanian UFO's
1989	14.2	11.9
1990	13.4	13.6
1991	8.5	10.6
1992	22.0	18.1
1993	10.2	6.6
1994-95	12.4	13.8
1996	16.3	26.8
1997	13.7	8.3
Total	13.8	13.7